

# Eliminating Syphilis

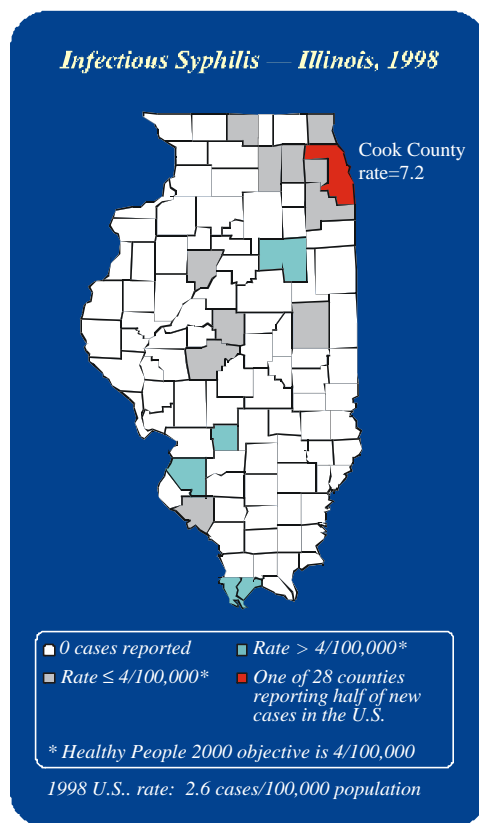
## Cook County (Chicago), Illinois

### *Why is Syphilis Elimination in the U.S. within our reach now?*

- Syphilis is a preventable and curable sexually transmitted disease (STD).
- Infectious syphilis is at the lowest rate ever reported: 2.6 cases/100,000 population (6,993 total cases).
- Syphilis is now very concentrated; half of all new cases in 1998 were reported from only 28 counties, which represent less than 1% of all U.S. counties.
- Other industrialized countries have already eliminated syphilis.

### *Why is it Important to Eliminate Syphilis in Cook County?*

- **In 1998 Cook County ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in the nation** in new cases of infectious syphilis (364 cases) and had a rate nearly 3 times higher than the national rate.
- **To reduce one of the most glaring racial disparities in health**
  - S 80% of cases are among African Americans (79% of cases nationally).
  - S The infectious syphilis rate in Cook County for African Americans is nearly 22 times greater than the rate for white Americans.
- **To decrease spread of HIV infection**
  - S Syphilis increases HIV transmission at least 2-to-5 fold.
  - S In 1998, syphilis in men who have sex with men accounted for 1/3 of all male cases in Chicago.
- **To improve infant health**
  - S Syphilis can be transmitted from mother to fetus during pregnancy causing stillbirths or congenital infection, some of which may result in persistent health problems.
  - S In 1998, 60 cases of congenital syphilis were reported from Cook County for a rate of 68.4 cases/100,000 births, 3 times higher than the national rate of 20.6 cases/100,000 births.



### *Cook County Responds*

- Chicago partners with minority and other community based organizations serving high risk populations throughout the city to increase awareness and access to syphilis screening and treatment referrals. These organizations include those serving substance abusers, sex workers, and the gay community. Syphilis screenings are being done in bathhouses as well as other community venues.
- In 1998, over 85% of approximately 100,000 detainees admitted to Cook County Jail were screened for syphilis.

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<http://www.cdc.gov/StopSyphilis/>



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 PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE  
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